

AUGUST 6, 1981

Yesterday the newspapers reported that President Reagan was proposing a change in the immigration laws. Included was the good news that he wanted to admit 50,000 guest workers from Mexico.

After the tax cuts and chances of coyote control returning, the hope of legal workers was plenty heady stuff for the Shortgrass Country. We've been so short of help that the sewing circles went underground for fear of labor recruitments. The riches of the oil boom were taking high school kids on the way home to put up their diplomas. Our labor situation was about on par with opening a dancing school in a lumber camp. The thought of 50,000 workers was indeed a pleasant accompaniment to the morning coffee.

Right after I read the story I called our congressman's office in San Angelo to apply for the job of making up the guest list for our district. Like I told his aide, I know plenty of unpapered aliens that fitted the phrase "guest worker" to its finest definition.

One had been picked up at the ranch by the Border Patrol less than three weeks ago. This was one that'd make every party rule of Miss Emily Post's look like she was holding something back for the holidays. He'd spent 14 months as a guest at the bunkhouse. During that period, he'd consumed so much Kool Aid and powdered lemonade mixes that the lady at the grocery store asked if I'd adopted a new family.

But don't misunderstand, I am plenty impressed by having a President who is that close in touch with the situation. Mr. Reagan seems to know instinctively the right thing to say. His proposal sounds like we want to give a big party for 50,000 workers. Guys like old Ted Kennedy that are always crying rivers of tears about folks they never see or know anything about surely won't object to having a big international visit.

About 49,000 of the guests need to be stationed in the Shortgrass Country. We can use that many men to catch up on patching the holes in the fences and propping up the water gaps. Most of us have put off enough work to use twice that many hombres. Probably the best thing to do would be to allow 50,000 to come across and get located so they could send home directions for more help.

Another brilliant portion of the President's request is a protective clause for employers of illegal aliens. It states that any employer who knowingly employs more than four illegal aliens is subject to be fined. I sure approve imposing a limit on the amount of wets that can be hired. I've seen the time when two hombres were about all that I was able to look after, and I consider myself well schooled in the field of feeding and caring for wet Mexicans.

Things have been sounding good for the Shortgrass Country. I never had any idea that the President of the United States knew anything about the workers down in Texas. Given a few more breaks, the song "Hail to the Chief" is going to cause some mighty soggy eyes in our parts. Excitement must be high in Mexico. It's going to be a sight when our guests start crossing the line.